

## OPENING STATEMENT

**HON. MARK UDALL (D-CO)**

**Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Space and Aeronautics  
U.S. House Committee on Science**

**Hearing: *"NASA's Science Mission Directorate:  
Impacts of the Fiscal Year 2007 Budget Proposal"***

**March 2, 2006**

Good morning. I'd like to join my colleagues in welcoming the witnesses to today's hearing, and I'm pleased to see that Dr. Fran Bagenal from the University of Colorado is part of the distinguished panel that will be testifying today. Welcome to all of you.

I will be brief in my remarks, because I believe that much of the prepared testimony echoes the concerns that I have about the direction NASA is headed.

Some have referred to NASA's science programs as NASA's "crown jewels." That's an apt characterization.

NASA's science activities - whether they involve missions to Pluto, scientific satellites observing the Earth, space-based observatories peering out to the farthest reaches of the universe, or researchers at university labs working on space, Earth, and life sciences research - all have the potential to advance our knowledge, inspire our youth, and improve the quality of life here on Earth.

That is not to say that human exploration is not also important - I strongly support an integrated program of human and robotic exploration. It makes good sense, and it will deliver many benefits to the nation over the long run.

However, we are not off to a good start when billions of dollars are cut from NASA's science programs within the first two years of the President's exploration initiative.

Even more troubling, some of those cuts are damaging the university-based research that is critical to training the next generation of scientists and engineers.

At our recent hearing with Administrator Griffin, he stated that he had asked Dr. Cleave to review the proposed Research and Analysis cuts. I hope that Dr. Cleave will be able to report on the status of that review today. I'd like to make my position clear, however.

I believe that those R&A cuts are ill-advised, and I intend to work with my colleagues to correct the situation as Congress considers the NASA funding request.

To use another analogy, in many respects NASA's science programs are the agency's intellectual "seed corn."

The FY 2007 budget request puts that "seed corn" at risk, and I think that's a mistake.

Well, we have a thoughtful set of experts whose testimony will be very helpful to us as we grapple with the implications of NASA's budget plan.

I want to thank them for their participation, and I look forward to hearing their testimony. I yield back the balance of my time.